

CLAIMS:

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1. A computer-based method of collecting and processing incidents observed by witnesses comprising the steps of:

receiving into a computer system an incident report from a witness who observed
5 an incident committed by an offender;
prompting the witness to provide certain types of information about the incident;
selecting an authority to whom the incident report should be sent; and
sending the incident report to the selected authority so that the authority can
respond to the incident report.

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2. The method as set forth in claim 1, the incident being selected from the group consisting of a criminal act, a legal violation, a sale of a defective product, and a rendering of an unsatisfactory service.

15 3. The method as set forth in claim 1, further including the step of prompting the witness to enter into the incident report identification information identifying the offender.

20 4. The method as set forth in claim 1, further including the step of receiving additional identification information identifying the offender and adding the additional identification information to the incident report.

25 5. The method as set forth in claim 4, the additional information being obtained by searching files accessible by the computer system based on the identification information entered by the witness.

30 6. The method as set forth in claim 4, the additional identification information being obtained by receiving the additional identification information from the authority based on the identification information entered by the witness.

7. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the authority is automatically selected by the computer system based on information entered into the incident report by the witness.

5 8. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the authority is selected by the witness.

9. The method as set forth in claim 1, further including the step of receiving into the computer system an action report from the authority explaining the
10 action the authority took in response to the incident report.

10. The method as set forth in claim 9, further including the step of storing the action report along with the incident report in a file accessible by the computer system.

15 11. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein incident reports from a plurality of different witnesses are received in the computer system.

12. The method as set forth in claim 11, further including the step of
20 storing the incident reports in a searchable database.

13. The method as set forth in claim 12, further including the step of permitting persons to access the searchable database to view the incident reports.

25 14. The method as set forth in claim 13, further including the step of receiving additional incident information from the persons that access the searchable database and adding the additional incident information to the incident reports to assist the authorities.

30 15. The method as set forth in claim 14, further including the step of sending the additional identification information to the witness.

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